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Industrial Home for the Blind

Guidelines for helping deaf-blind
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GUIDELINES

FOR HELPING

DEAF-BLIND PERSONS



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The Industrial Home for the Blind
57 Willoughby Street
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The Anne Sullivan Macy Service for Deaf-Blind Persons, a cooperative undertaking of the U.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration and The Industrial Home for the Blind, has been operating since 1962, serving deaf-blind adults.

The Industrial Home for the Blind has had a formal Department of Services for the Deaf-Blind since 1945, but the agency's work with deaf-blind persons dates back more than fifty years.

When helping a deaf-blind person, you are his main link with the world. Patience and sympathetic understanding can work wonders. As you help, you will always be learning to be still more helpful.

A deaf-blind person might not always show it, but he is extremely eager to be understood, to be known, to be brought into closer touch with the world. He has a personality of his own, and communication is the touchstone of its expression.

Appreciation of these assets will be most valuable to you. Be careful, however, to avoid hasty judgments of a deaf-blind person's intelligence and abilities — however limited or remarkable they might seem.

Make sure your help is wanted. Never try forcing either help or ideas upon a deaf-blind person. Respect him. He is a thinking person with his own tastes, needs, wishes, and habits.

In helping a deaf-blind person, you will have many things working for you. Quite likely there will be difficulties, but your patience will go a long way in overcoming them. Common courtesy, common sense, and communication—those are the keys.

International Standard Manual Alphabet



Anyone who can print simple block letters can make immediate use of the alphabet shown above in communicating with most deaf-blind persons. Red lines, arrows, and numbers indicate proper direction, sequence, and number of strokes. Print only in the palm

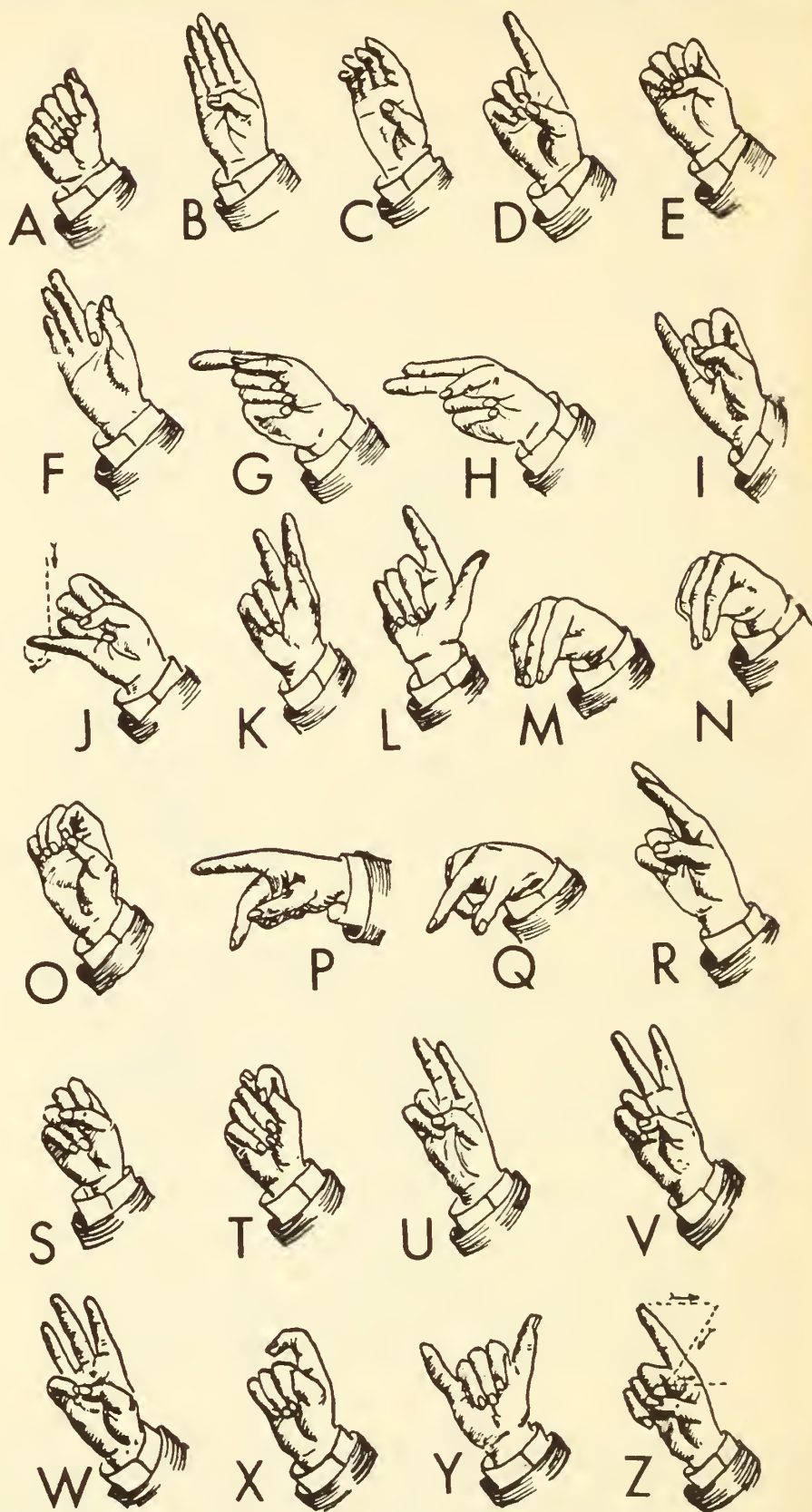
area. Do not try to connect letters. Complete one, pause, then complete the next on the same palm area. Pause longer at the end of a word. Faster communication is often possible with alphabet shown on back page, but it must be memorized and practiced often.

GUIDELINES

1. When you approach a deaf-blind person, let him know—by a simple touch—that you are near. A warm, firm handshake will show your friendly interest.
2. Make positive but gentle use of any means of communication you adopt. Abrupt or exaggerated gestures might be disturbing or misunderstood.
3. Work out with him a simple but special signal for identifying yourself to him.
4. Learn and use whatever method of communication he knows, however elementary. If a more adequate method might be valuable to him, help him learn it.
5. Always be sure the deaf-blind person understands you, and be sure that you understand him.
6. Encourage him to use his voice if he has speech, even if he knows only a few words.
7. If there are others present, let him know when it is appropriate for him to speak.
8. Always inform him of his whereabouts.
9. Always tell him when you are leaving, even if it is only for a brief period. See that he is comfortably and safely situated. If he is not sitting, he will need something substantial to touch in your absence. Place his hand on it before leaving. Never abandon a deaf-blind person in unfamiliar surroundings.
10. When with a deaf-blind person, keep sufficiently close so that, by physical contact, he will know you are there.
11. In walking, let him take your arm. Never push him ahead of you.
12. Make use of a simple set of signals (a) far going up stairs, (b) far going down stairs, (c) far entering a door, (d) for getting into a vehicle. A deaf-blind person holding your arm can usually sense any change in pace or direction.
13. Encourage a deaf-blind person to use his own initiative and ability, however limited. Encourage him to express his own ideas. Encourage his interest in new experiences.
14. Rely on your natural courtesy, consideration, and common sense. Avoid getting flustered or irritated if misunderstandings arise. Occasional difficulties in communication are only to be expected.

In helping a deaf-blind person, you will have many things working for you. Quite likely there will be difficulties, but your patience will go a long way in overcoming them. Common courtesy, common sense, and communication—those are the keys.

One Hand Manual Alphabet



Communication with a deaf-blind person who knows the above alphabet can be quite rapid. The finger positions are formed within his cupped hand. Certain letter formations are closely related, and it often speeds memorizing if they are learned in the following groups and in the order given: (A C E O S T (D G H I J L X Z) (K P) (M N Q) (B F R U V W Y)

